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### UM study examines visitors to some of Montana's oldest towns

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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This release is available electronically on INN (News Net.)

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**Contact:** Kim McMahon, Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, (406) 243-5686, [kmcmahon@forestry.umt.edu](mailto:kmcmahon@forestry.umt.edu).

### **UM STUDY EXAMINES VISITORS TO SOME OF MONTANA'S OLDEST TOWNS**

#### **MISSOULA —**

A recent study by the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at The University of Montana examines who goes in search of history at Nevada City and Virginia City. It's the first time a travel survey has been conducted in two of Montana's most historical towns.

Traffic counters and visitor intercepts were used to establish total traffic through the towns last year from July 1 through Sept. 30. Nearly 1,200 booklet surveys also were gathered.

The traffic survey found that 69,350 individuals in 30,152 groups stopped and visited the two historical towns during the three-month study period. Of those, 60 percent were from U.S. states outside Montana, 35 percent were from Montana (but outside the Virginia City area), 4 percent were from foreign countries other than Canada and 2 percent were from Canada.

Researchers said 65,139 vehicles passed through the towns during the study period. Of those, 53 percent were potential visitors. The rest were local residents or commercial or

-more-



government groups. Of the potential visitors, 44 percent spent less than an hour in the towns, 11 percent spent one to four hours and 33 percent spent four or more hours. The average group size was 2.3 individuals, and only 19 percent of visitor groups included children.

The visitor survey found that satisfaction with the historical towns was high. The most common suggestions for improvements were to continue restoring and maintaining historical buildings, boardwalks and displays, as well as to expand the variety of food, shops, entertainment and attractions in the towns. At least a third of respondents also recognized a need for better disabled access.

Most survey respondents came to the towns for pleasure trips, and the majority stayed only a single day. More overnight accommodations were cited as the best way to extend visitors' stays.

For more information on this or other ITRR research projects, visit the Web page at <http://www.forestry.umt.edu/itrr>.

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